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Latin American Trends

STAFF NOTES

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LATIN AMERICAN TRENDS

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Argentina: Industrial Terrorism

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Montonero guerrillas are involved in an intense effort to strengthen their influence within the Argentine labor movement. They reportedly are concentrating their activites among factory workers. Summarized below is an airgram from the labor attache in Buenos Aires on the subject of industrial terrorism.

Increasing alienation between the leadership and the rank-and-file of organized labor has created an atmosphere ripe for exploitation by terrorists. Both the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) and the Montoneros are evidently taking advantage of the situation. Businessmen and labor leaders alike suspect foreign involvement as well.

The guerrillas use murder, kidnaping, and intimidation of management personnel to force management to give in to their demands. Officers involved in industrial relations or personnel management seem to be particular targets for violence.

Direct threats against workers are another tactic. Workers who fail to carry out some guerrilla-directed action against management may be subjected to personal harassment or threats against their families; they may even be kidnaped and murdered. These tactics are attributed to the ERP rather than the Montoneros, who are more inclined to take action against management.

At times, factory guerrillas deal directly with the union and have been known to win over the shop-level union leadership. At other times they seize control of a union meeting and force through their proposals. Recognizing these persons as terrorists, the workers dare not oppose them.

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Management seems to have little alternative but to yield. Most foreign firms comply with the demands of terrorists and then transfer all non-Argentine personnel out of the country. One company simply shut down its plant after receiving no response to requests for police or government assistance.

The military, although aware of the problem of industrial terrorism, has so far stayed mainly on the sidelines, but the government may be forced to call upon it more in the future. Until and unless the social discontent that sustains terrorism is somehow ameliorated, the phenomenon can be expected to continue on the Argentine scene for some time. 3.5(c)

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